

Caregiver Connection

November 2008

A monthly publication for Washington state foster and adoptive families and relative caregivers

Acknowledgment is the first step toward addressing the unmet needs of children of color in out-of-home care

Children "of color", specifically African American and Native American, come into contact with child welfare more frequently, are placed into care more often, and stay in out-of-home care longer than Caucasian children. This trend is referred to as "disproportionality". National research also indicates these children tend to receive inadequate support services and are less prepared for adulthood than their Caucasian peers.

It is important to emphasize this is not because adults in racial and ethnic minority groups abuse their children more than Caucasian parents do.

Facts about Disproportionality

- There is no difference between racial and ethnic groups in the likelihood that a parent will abuse or neglect a child.
- There is a great difference between races in the likelihood that a child will be removed from home and placed in foster care.

Statistics in Washington state:

According to the 2008 report, Racial Disproportionality in Washington state:

- African American children are 1.2 times more likely to be placed in care.
- Native American children are 1.6 times more likely to be placed in care.
- Hispanic children statewide were no more likely to be removed from home but those in and around the Seattle area were more likely to be placed in care.

What can be done?

Change must happen on both a personal level and a system level. The Child Welfare System has begun to acknowledge the need to change and is making efforts to improve outcomes for disproportionately represented children. On a personal level, it is critical to look at ourselves, examine our beliefs, and evaluate our actions. We must also be advocates for children of color in our care. We have a responsibility to speak on their behalf and make certain they receive necessary services and supports.

To view the disproportionality report in its entirety, go to <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/pubs/disproportionReport.asp> to find out other ways to help address the issue of disproportionality please contact Robert T. Nelson (360) 902-0239 or email him at nelsonr@dshs.wa.gov.

Regional Foster Parent Representatives

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Marci Miess

marcimiess@hotmail.com
360-880-5330



BACK ROW: Steve (dad); MIDDLE ROW: Adin, Ashley, Angela, Dawn (mom); BOTTOM ROW: Jacen, Jessica, and Xander (in Angela's arms)



Photo by Greg Cook

Meet the Fillo Family

Dawn and Steve Fillo married in 1991 and within five years had two children, Ashley and Adin. Dawn was a stay-at-home mom and Steve worked for a major Cellular phone company.

Dawn wanted to be home for their children and wanted to find a way to help other kids. The couple thought that fostering would give them a chance to support children whose lives had been so painful while helping their children learn empathy, patience, and understanding.

The Fillos say that fostering has changed their lives forever. They initially only wanted to take children younger than their own so as not to "upset the pecking order." They never planned to be a permanent home for the children placed in their care. Despite their initial plans to exclusively foster, they have adopted siblings Jessica and Jacen who are now 10 and 5 and have since added two more foster children, a 17-year-old teen mom and her 19-month-old baby boy.

The entire family is an active, on-the-go bunch; the kids play team sports and have covered just about every field and court imaginable. The Fillo's oldest son is involved in motocross and the rest of the family is following in his tire tracks. The whole group loves camping and fishing on the Fillo's property along the Wynoochee River.

The Fillos say they continue to do foster care for no other reason than because of the progress they see in the children that have stayed in their home. There is no better feeling than to watch a child who has built a concrete wall around themselves for protection learn to trust, love, and appreciate themselves. In their eyes, that is a priceless gift.

The Fillos found a way to teach compassion to their own children while helping other children heal.

You can too.

Foster Care to College programs emphasize motivating young people to pursue college and offers supports to stay in school

"You Can Go to College" Seminars Raise Expectations and Motivate Youth

Washington State foster youth in grades six through twelve who are interested in or curious about college may attend the You Can Go to College seminar program. These seminars help youth learn the steps they need to take to achieve their career dreams. Below is a schedule for upcoming seminars and regional contact provider information. Check our website for weekly updates to the seminar schedule www.independence.wa.gov.

NOVEMBER 6, 2008

Building self esteem and handling interpersonal conflict
Region 3, Skagit Valley College

DECEMBER 2, 2008

Financial resources available for foster youth
Region 3, McIntyre Hall

Foster Care to College Mentoring Program

Youth can work with a mentor learning about careers, filling out college applications and financial aid forms, or even touring a campus. This program is available in Washington State in regions 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 and available in region 4 through the Treehouse Coaching-to-College program.



To learn more about you You Can Go to College Seminars and College Mentoring, contact the provider in your region listed below

REGION 1

Jen Cox
Service Alternatives
509-325-7080

REGION 2

Laura Riel
Catholic Family & Child Services
509-965-7100

REGION 3

Eva Ervin
Youthnet
360-336-1212

REGION 4

Treehouse
206-767-7000

REGION 5

Stephanie Dornes
Pierce County Alliance
253-502-5400

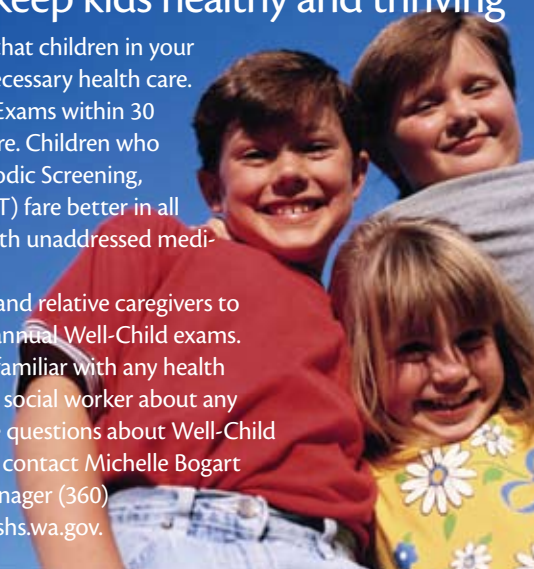
REGION 6

Molly Robertson
Community Youth Services
360-943-0780 Ext. 156

Well-Child exams keep kids healthy and thriving

Please remember to make sure that children in your care receive preventative and necessary health care. Children must have Well-Child Exams within 30 days of entering out of home care. Children who receive necessary Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) fare better in all areas of their lives than those with unaddressed medical or dental issues.

It is also important for foster and relative caregivers to ensure that their children have annual Well-Child exams. Caregivers should also become familiar with any health concerns, and inform the child's social worker about any problems and needs. If you have questions about Well-Child checks and dental exams please contact Michelle Bogart Foster Care Health Program Manager (360) 902-8006 or email bogm300@dshs.wa.gov.





Fall is in the air, and holidays are just around the corner

Many communities have programs that support kids in care by providing gifts during the holidays. Although fall has just begun, these programs are already preparing for the coming season, and CA workers will soon be registering children for these programs. If your social worker has not contacted you about this yet, please check in with them to find out if your child is eligible for referral to one of these programs.

The 26th Annual Foster Care and Caregiver conference was a huge success

More than 500 people gathered in Yakima September 21-23 for the 26th annual Foster Parent and Caregiver Conference. Participants chose from among 74 workshops to enhance their work as caregivers and members of the child welfare community. They also heard from two motivational keynote speakers, Jerry Tello and Scott Q. Marcus.

Professional comedian Debbie Wooten set a humorous and inspirational tone for the conference as the emcee. A mother of five, she has faced her own physical challenges with spina bifida and polio. She was able to connect with many in the room and received a standing ovation at the end of the conference. Many participants suggested she return as the emcee in 2009. The conference also featured a variety of presentations, in person and by video, from both caregivers and current and former youth in care telling how their lives had been positively changed because of their experiences. Conference organizers collected and gave away about 115 gift baskets and other prizes to caregivers.

The conference has grown the past quarter century from a small picnic in the park south of Olympia to one of the largest conferences of its kind in the country. The theme for next year's conference will be "Lighting the Path for Others," taken from the quote, "As you light the path for others, so is your path lit."

Post Adoption **Support**

Book Nook

BOOK TITLE

After Adoption

Chapter 8 in *Adoption in the United States: A Reference for Families, Professionals and Students*

AUTHOR

Henry, Martha J. and Pollack, Daniel

PUBLICATION YEAR

2008

ABSTRACT

Child development and understanding of adoption from infancy to age 4, ages 8-11, and in adolescence. How to talk to children about adoption. Post-adoption support and services. Information for schools about adapting lessons about families and genetics, and multicultural adoptive families. Also provides information for families of children with disabilities.

Did You Know?

November is National Adoption Month. This month has been set aside for raising awareness about adoption. National Adoption Day is Saturday, November 15, 2008, look for events all over the state.



Adoption – The gift that keeps on giving

It is 3:00 in the morning on a dark autumn work day and from across the hallway I hear Kiana, our "resident" 20-month-old announce that she is awake. As the early riser of the household, I have the privilege of responding. She greets me with a sleepy smile and upraised arms with little fingers clutching her blanket and bunny. In her eyes and face, I see love and complete trust. I also see the likeness of another little girl who at Kiana's age was in a foster home. That little girl, our beautiful daughter is now 23 years old and sleeping soundly while her mother, Kiana's grandmother entertains a very awake baby. Our daughter came into our lives through adoption and now as the result of that adoption, we have the gift of hearing the giggles and coos of another beautiful girl just across the hall. November is National Adoption month. Child welfare agencies and family courts all over the nation are planning celebrations to honor this wonderful way to create a family. We all have stories of this journey in parenting. I love those ads that say "you don't have to be perfect to be a perfect parent". Each day, sometimes starting at 3AM I get a chance to demonstrate that; only now I get to show that you don't have to be perfect to be a perfect grandparent.

Regional Contacts

Region 1 – Spokane

Jan Lammers* 509-363-3383
Pam Copeland* 509-363-3379

Region 2 – Yakima

Steve Bergland* 509-225-6500
Carol Cyr 509-225-6531
(Financial Specialist)

Region 3 – Monroe

Steve Foster* 360-805-3032
Linda Richardson* 360-805-3030

Region 4 – Bellevue

Aaron Washington* 425-590-3072
Jenne Norris 425-590-3069
(Social Worker)

Region 5 – Tacoma

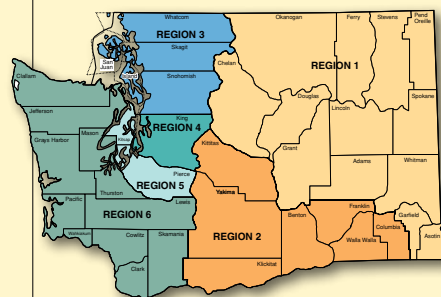
Cindy Anderson* 253-983-6359
Laura Davis* 253-983-6281

Region 6 – Tumwater

Cheryl Barrett* 360-725-6758
Kim Mower* 360-725-6778

Toll free number: 1-800-562-5682
(listen carefully to the recorded message)

* Adoption Support Consultants



Important numbers to know when you take care of children in out-of-home care

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

ON-GOING AND CRISIS SUPPORTS FOR FOSTER PARENTS

Under contracts with the state, three private agencies are working to build supports for you within the foster care community. Supports include hubs, support groups, and matching new foster parents with veteran foster parents. To get connected:

- If you live in Eastern Washington, the Olympic Peninsula down through Pacific County or from Thurston County to Clark County, call 1-888-794-1794.
- If you live in King County, call 206-605-0664 and in any county from Snohomish County north, call 360-510-7601 or 360-863-6530.
- If you live in Pierce or Kitsap counties, call 253-473-9252.
- If you live in King County, the Friends of Youth CARE program provides short-term counseling, education and support to help you care for your most difficult children. 1-888-263-3457.

Family Help Line: 1-800-932-HOPE or www.parenttrust.org. The Family Help Line is a free, statewide training and referral line for the families of Washington state. Last year, the Family Help Line received more than 5,000 calls and requests for information. Calls can last up to 90 minutes and parents can call as often as needed.

Support for foster parents under investigation for allegations of abuse or neglect: Foster Parent Investigation Retention Support Team (FIRST) 253-219-6782. Monday through Saturday, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., or leave a message and receive a return call within 24 hours.

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

Mental Health Crisis Line Information: The crisis line telephone number for your county or region is available on the DSHS Mental Health Division website at: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth/crisis.shtml>.

GENERAL FOSTER PARENT INFORMATION FOR THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

FPAWS: Foster Parent Association of Washington State, 1-800-391-CARE (2273) or www.fpaws.org. FPAWS is seeking new members and supporting foster parents in many ways, including referrals to local associations.

Kitsap and Pierce County information about becoming a foster parent or to receive foster parent support: Foster Care Resource Network, 253-473-9252. Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. or leave a message and receive a return call by the next business day.

RESOURCE INFORMATION AVAILABLE STATEWIDE

Get connected to information on resources in your area by calling 211 – a toll free number.

Children's Administration Foster Parent Website:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/>

Children's Administration Foster Parent Training Website – Trainings are open to all licensed foster parents, licensed relative caregivers and unlicensed caregivers. For information about foster parent and caregiver training, check out:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/training.asp>

CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION FOSTER CARE LISTSERV

Join the 400 people who have subscribed to the List Serve

<http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=fosterparents&&A=1> for updated information on resources for the work you do in caring for children.

Family Planning Services are designed to help avoid unwanted or mistimed pregnancy and are available through your local Community Service Office (CSO). Each CSO has a full time Family Planning Nurse to help provide services to Medicaid eligible clients. There is also a Family Planning hotline number 1-800-770-4334.

Schedule of Upcoming Events

Please Attend Quarterly Regional and Statewide Consultation Meetings

What are Quarterly Regional and Statewide Foster Consultation Meetings?

The consultation team is a ground breaking forum for CA, foster parents, and Foster Parent Association of Washington (FPAWS), to meet quarterly (regional and statewide) to discuss issues related to recruitment and retention of foster parents, effective training for foster parents, strengthening collaboration between foster parents and Children's Administration, and strengthening services for the protection of children.

Contact your Regional Foster Parent Representative to learn more about the quarterly regional and statewide consultation meetings. To get familiar with the issues from your region take a look at the minutes from the regional and statewide consultation meetings on the foster parent website. <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/index.asp>

The 2009 Statewide Consultation meetings will be held at the Tacoma DCFS office 1949 South State Street Tacoma, WA 98405 from 1:00 to 4:00 Room 291.

The 2009 meeting dates are:

January 13, 2009

April 8, 2009

July 8, 2009

October 7, 2009

All regional and statewide meetings are open to foster parents and relative caregivers.